



Columnists



# Opinion: Don't ask Ukraine to thank US

Calgary Herald

Published Jul 15, 2023 • Last updated 1 day ago • 3 minute read

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One of the few remaining villagers walks past a building damaged by recent shelling during heavy fighting at the frontline of Bakhmut and Chasiv Yar, in Chasiv Yar, Ukraine, April 12, 2023. REUTERS/Kai Pfaffenbach

The recent call from U.S. and U.K. government politicians for Ukraine to be thankful shows a blinkered view because it disregards the existential risk facing Western democracy and Ukraine's courage in fighting democracy's current enemy number one.

At the Nato summit on Tuesday, U.K. defence secretary Ben Wallace, and U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan, both called for more gratitude from Ukraine, with Wallace saying the U.K. is not an Amazon for weapons.

Wallace and Sullivan are wrong. Yes, Ukraine has had to fight for its own life, its freedom, and even its existence as a sovereign nation, but it has also been fighting a regime that threatens every value that we outside Ukraine cherish and still enjoy. So, every drop of Ukrainian blood has been shed for global gain.

In such an interdependent situation, who should actually be thanking whom? How do we measure which direction any gratitude should be flowing?

We can answer this by expanding the financial concept of Return on Investment to 'Return on Sacrifice.' We can consider the sacrifice suffered by Ukraine against its necessity or benefit to the country and then compare this Return on Sacrifice to the West's own return on its Ukrainian 'investment.' By this measure, the West has already seen a very good democracy return for a very modest sacrifice – a Return on Sacrifice no less worthwhile than Ukraine's.

Alternatively, we could just simply ask who has done more for the other. This leads to the same answer: Ukraine – in tipping the global autocracy-democracy balance in the right direction – has done at least as much for the West as the West has done for Ukraine.

Ukraine's motivation for its sacrifice, courage and determination is indeed for survival rather than expressly to help other democratic nations. However, we can likewise say that the West is helping Ukraine, so its own values have a higher chance of not being turned to dust. Zelensky is right to stress that Russia is the common enemy of all democratic nations. We should not forget that it is simply because of the way the cards of history have fallen that the responsibility to fight Putin directly has befallen Ukraine.

The main benefit of considering 'balance of gratitude' is to spotlight that Western assistance is not purely altruistic or some sort of charity. If we accept that we are all in this together, there is, in fact, no need for thanks in either direction.

When the history of the 21st century is written – if it happens to be a story that ends with the survival of democracy and freedom for Homo Sapiens – it will be obvious that the nation that surprised the world by standing up to Putin and helped avert the downward slide of values on the planet, had no need whatsoever to thank anyone.

We should not expect David to thank us while fighting Goliath for the common good.

Moreover, when the trajectory of insufficient support could be the long-term loss of freedom itself, this is not the time to count the beans. We are in a battle that we cannot risk waging by half-measure because it is for our values.

Demanding gratitude both disrespects Ukraine and undermines the message that we are all in the battle together. No civilized person needs to thank another for jointly trying to save civilization. It would be much better for leaders to have the vision to explain why thanks are not due.

*Mark Dixon is the founder of the Moral Rating Agency, which measures companies' involvement with Russia under a standardized rating system to get them out of Russia and to get Russia out of Ukraine.*



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